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SUBJECT: LOCAL NGO LAUNCHING NEW WOMEN'S CENTER IN MOSUL

REF: 2005 MOSUL 148

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) In an effort to address concerns of unemployment, job training, and community counseling for Iraqi women, members of the Assembly of Ninevah NGOs, a local NGO umbrella organization, have created a second women's center for western Mosul. The effort expands on the already existing Iraq Women's Center, located on the eastern side of the Tigris River, by dividing the city to better meet the needs of the community. The organization is searching for a permanent headquarters location and is requesting donor assistance for the expansion. End Summary.

2. (SBU) PRT Poloff met with Assembly of Nineveh NGOs director Mohammed Tahir, Iraqi Women Institute (IWI) director Rajaa Zeedan Radhe Al-Ukabee, and IWI members Ibrahim Mohammed Ibrahim Hussein, Wafa Ahman Ismael, Kareema Mohammed Shanawee, and Sara Mohammed Ibrahim Hussein, in Mosul on February 9.

MORE WOMEN'S CENTERS TO HELP THE COMMUNITY

3. (SBU) Assembly of Ninevah NGOs director Tahir (who is also the deputy director of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq "IECI" branch office in Mosul) said women are the "pillar of strength in Iraqi society." He said he believes one center is "not enough" to address the concerns of women in the city. Tahir, with center director Al-Ukabee, said the new center would work "hand-in-hand" with Anan Ibrahim Al-Qado's Iraq Women's Center (formally directed by Nafia'a Nafia'a who was assassinated in October 2005) (reftel). The idea, according to Tahir and Al-Ukabee, is to have two centers that can focus completely on opposite sides of the city, but work collectively to address the community.

4. (SBU) The new center launched this year, called the Iraqi Women Institute (IWI), already has eight board members with 243 registered members. By contrast, Iraq Women's Center (IWC) has 235 registered members. Tahir said both organizations are "gaining in membership" and are struggling for resources to meet the demands of the community. IWI is currently operating out of a four-bedroom home on the western side of Mosul, using two of the bedrooms for classrooms and daycare and the other two for housing volunteers. Al-Ukabee would like to expand the center to a new and larger headquarters in the west. She has dreams of creating a computer learning center and classrooms that could teach trade classes, such as sewing, and business and managerial skills. She said she believes there are "too many young women" in Mosul who "have no direction" due to high unemployment. In addition to the services mentioned above, IWI conducts pre-marriage counseling for young couples, and after-marriage sessions for recently divorced women. Tahir, who oversees more than 200 non-government organizations, said IWI and IWC are fully compliant and registered with the central government in Baghdad.

REQUEST FOR DONOR ASSISTANCE AND COMMENT

5. (SBU) Al Ukabee is looking for donor assistance to help address the organization's expansion, since she claimed the center is completely reliant on dues payments by members and contributions. Tahir said the goal is to create many more women's centers in and outside of Mosul to meet the needs of Ninewa's female population. The original center, IWC, has been very successful since liberation, and played a significant role during the national election by conducting three outreach conferences for women. The conferences, funded by Embassy Baghdad, focused on women's role in democracy, voting, and election monitoring. Observing the positive role IWC has played over the past few years, we can conclude that the expansion of more community organizations seems a positive step forward towards empowering women in Iraqi society.

MUNTER